

COMMERCE COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING – MARCH 10, 2016 – 11 A.M. LOB 2E

TESTIMONY: SB 396 – An Act Concerning A Fast Track for Apprenticeships

Submitted by: Joyce A. Wojtas, Lobbyist – Mechanical Contractors Association of CT

The Mechanical Contractors Association of CT (MCAC) would like to express concerns about SB 396 for the following reasons in regard to apprenticeships for occupational licenses issued under Chapter 393:

- For too long, too many employers have ignored the apprenticeship law and have exploited young (and sometimes older) individuals by hiring them as apprentices and putting them to work, but not registering them with the Labor Department. I do not know if there is an actual accounting of the number of unregistered people who have gone before the Occupational Licensing Boards for approval to take the test for a license, however, I do know that the cases have been numerous.
- These employers, who fail to register their so-called apprentices, are doing this so that they can hire workers for less money and unfortunately, that worker usually believes they are a bonafide apprentice. Although there are serious penalties for these types of violations, enforcement is a problem and has been for a number of years.
- “Prior work experience” as stated in Section 1.(a) of the bill could mean that the person did actually work for the employer. However, if this is a Connecticut employer who did not register this individual in the apprenticeship program at DOL, can we trust what kind of work experience this person actually has. The worker could have only been a “go-for” employee and have received absolutely no training for the field they want an apprenticeship in, including safety training. The employer is probably a licensed contractor, so ignorance of the law is no excuse.
- Although MCAC sympathizes with the individuals that has been exploited, the overall classroom training and work experience required (registered apprenticeships) by the DOL and DCP Boards to qualify to take an examination for a specific licensed trade should be complied with. It is a matter of the safety of the worker, the consumer, and the public.
- As a reminder, the State currently accepts prior military work experience for veterans. (Ref. C.G.S. PA14-131, Sec. 4)

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. This bill should not be approved as drafted.

Joyce A. Wojtas
joyce.wojtas@outlook.com
860-280-4623